

## TITLE PAGE

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### Locating and mitigating risks to children associated with major sporting events

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite recent efforts to blend sport and human rights, activism for children's rights in sport has historically been marginalised. The positive 'social legacy' of sport events frequently masks more problematic issues, including child exploitation. We argue that harms to children in hosting communities of major sporting events (MSEs) should be a focus for both research and intervention since the plight of such children is currently a political blind spot. The article examines the evidence for four major sources of risk for children associated with such events: child labour, displacement resulting from forced evictions for infrastructure development and street clearance, child sexual exploitation, and human trafficking affecting children. The weakness of the resulting evidence is explained in relation to the methodological and ethical difficulties of conducting research on such hidden and marginal populations and to the fact that risks to children are often masked by adult social problems. It is argued that much more robust research designs, focused specifically on children, are essential in order to verify the many assertions made about risks to children associated with MSEs. Some mitigating interventions are briefly examined and an action plan for risk mitigation work at future MSEs is proposed. Finally, drawing on wider debates about Centres and Peripheries in social and economic theory, we question whether major international sport organisations might choose to engage with projects like child protection for strategic rather than humanitarian reasons, using them as a kind of ethical fig leaf in order to bolster their power bases against threats from the margins.

**KEY WORDS:** child exploitation, major sporting events

Despite recent efforts to blend sport and human rights (Brackenridge, Fasting *et al.*, 2010; Brackenridge, Kay & Rhind, 2012; Pillay, 2012), activism for children's rights in sport has historically been marginalised. For example, mainstream feminism was reluctant to engage with sport in the 1980s defining sport as inexorably linked to male hegemony (Hargreaves, 1994). More recently, the UN General Secretary's Global Study of Violence Against Children made only passing reference to sport despite the worldwide use of sport in development work (Pinheiro, 2006). Conventional wisdom casts sport as a site of fun, healthy lifelong physical activity and pleasure. However, the positive 'social legacy' of sport events frequently masks more problematic issues such as gender-based violence, cheating, corruption and child exploitation (Lemke, 2011).

Thus far, and despite long-standing international agreement on children's rights (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989), child protection has not been a criterion of either bidding or social legacy planning for most MSEs, rendering children invisible. Here, we argue that harms to children in hosting communities of MSEs should be a focus for research enquiry and intervention since the plight of such children is currently a political blind spot in MSE-related policy and practice.

The substance of the article is drawn from a study funded under Oak Foundation's Child Abuse Programme (Oak, 2012) that involved talking with more than 70 experts from human rights and sport. A systematic review of the literature was also conducted on child exploitation associated with MSEs. The resulting report (Brackenridge, Palmer-Felgate *et al.*, 2013) informed a workshop with NGO and public sector staff in Brazil in June 2013 to prepare a risk mitigation plan for the 2014 Brazil FIFA World Cup.

This article begins by problematising and mapping some of the conceptual and theoretical issues associated with this issue. It summarises the evidence about risks to children associated with MSEs and considers some measurement issues. The case for collaborative action on harm mitigation by international sport organisations is examined. Finally, we speculate on whether the major sport organisations, which have traditionally occupied the sporting 'Centre', might come to adopt a child protection agenda as a defence against incursions from their critics in the 'Peripheries' (Shils, 1961; Galtung, 1971).

## Locating children at risk

[insert Fig 1 about here]

Previous work on understanding and preventing risks to child athletes includes a review for UNICEF (Brackenridge, Fasting *et al.*, 2010) and online training for the Youth Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee [IOC], 2010). UNICEF has since promoted child safety in sport in its humanitarian work (Pillay, 2012). Whilst it is undeniable that the rights of child athletes require protection (Brackenridge & Rhind, 2010; Brackenridge, Kay & Rhind, 2012), the focus of this article is on risks to children within MSE hosting communities, *outside but associated with* these events (Fig. 1).

There appears to be no universally adopted conceptual approach to childhood risk analysis. The UN Secretary General's global study on violence against children adopted a *settings* approach (home and family; schools and education; care and justice institutions; community and work) (Pinheiro, 2006). This drew on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development, which was also applied by Krug to understand risk and protective factors in violence (individual, relationship, community and society) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Krug, 1972). Others have focussed on children's exploitation *experiences* - sexual abuse, physical punishment and so on (Cawson *et al.*, 2000; Radford *et al.*, 2011).

[insert Fig 2 about here]

What is clear is that risks emerge at all levels - individual, family, community and society. These risks result from a combination of social, economic, cultural, environmental and structural factors that can disempower children and weaken their protective environment. Unravelling the determinants of risk to children and their cause-effect relationship is a highly complex task. Doing so in relation to a timeline - before, during and after MSEs (Fig. 2) - is even more difficult in a field replete with assumptions but often lacking evidence. In the absence of a common conceptual framework, in our study we therefore followed the literature, which typically addresses risk *experiences*.

## Evidence

A number of correlates of risks to children at MSEs emerged in the literature, including: unemployment; poverty; forced displacement and migration; conflict; poor law enforcement; and, local cultural, societal and religious practices - for example the normalising of sexual violence, the subordination of children, and hegemonic masculinity associated with some participants in football culture. Whilst these may be considered as general socio-cultural and economic factors, they intersect in specific ways within each MSE locality. For example, proximity to foreign borders, variations in demand for sexual services, relaxation of visa controls or different levels of police vigilance can all affect overall risks to children. We identified four main categories of risk and harm: child labour, displacement of children resulting from forced evictions for infrastructure development and street clearance, child sexual exploitation (CSE), and human trafficking affecting children.

### ***Child labour***

This is the most long-standing form of child exploitation associated with MSEs and may be the main cause of human trafficking to them (Donnelly & Petherick, 2004; Pemberton Ford, 2012). Labour includes involvement of children in the manufacturing of sporting goods, the construction of stadia, and forced begging or street selling (Gustafson, 2011; Morrow, 2008; Play Fair, 2008). In some localities, however, child labour is regarded 'normal', posing a challenge to those pressing for an end to the practice (Coordination Group on Human Trafficking and London 2012 Network, 2011). India's labour force, for example, includes 12% who are children as young as five years old (Coordination Group on Human Trafficking and London 2012 Network). In Bolivia there is now a trade union established and run by teenagers for whom commercial labour is regarded as an economic necessity (Shariari, 2012). Some media reports of forced child begging associated with MSEs are simply not supported by evaluation studies and, according to Pemberton Ford (2012), during the 2004 Olympic Games the number of street children registered by NGO support workers actually declined. It is not clear whether this was due to higher than usual policing of the streets – a deterrent effect – and/or the difficulties involved in monitoring child exploitation.

### ***Displacement***

Displacement of communities for infrastructure development is commonplace before major sporting events. The literature is vague with regard to when displacement becomes forced eviction, and even more so regarding when this constitutes child exploitation. Before the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, 720,000 people were forcibly displaced for infrastructure development. This increased poverty, divided families and heavily impacted on children who witnessed their parents being beaten and their houses torn down (Czeglédy in Pillay, 2009; COHRE, 2007).

Child exploitation resulting from this kind of forced eviction mainly affects children whose families are already marginalised and vulnerable. For example:

- before the South Africa 2007 FIFA Preliminary Draw, street children were ‘housed’ in Westville Prison, exposing them to violence, rape and possible HIV (Ngonyama, 2011);
- the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games reportedly displaced 1.25 million residents, with an additional 400,000 migrants from rural areas living temporarily in extreme insecurity (Advocates for Human Dignity, 2012);
- the Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games led to the eviction of 300,000 people from city slums. Some of these were violent and unplanned with no entitlements for the evictees who now live in resettlement camps far from schools and economic opportunities in Delhi (Advocates for Human Dignity, 2012).

These cases illustrate how specific risks to children are interconnected. For example, the forced eviction of children for infrastructure and stadium development further increases vulnerability to risks such as sexual or labour exploitation as economic alternatives are removed and traditional support systems broken down.

Displacement of street children and poor communities as part of event ‘clean-up’ has been a regular concern of child welfare advocates and researchers at past MSEs:

- for the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games, Roma communities and informal traders were strategically removed from the streets during the event as part of a longer-term political agenda by the Spanish authorities (Czeglédy, 2009);

- for the Japan and Korea 2002 FIFA World Cup, 300 homeless were 'cleaned up' from Osaka and in Seoul city officials set up 'off-limits' areas for homeless people (COHRE, 2007);
- for the Ghana 2008 African Cup of Nations, there were reports of street hawkers being forcibly evicted from the venues (Broadbent, 2012);
- for the South Africa 2010 FIFA World Cup, 600 street children and youth were moved to an apartheid-style relocation or transit camp 30km from Cape Town, leading to an increase in social problems including sexual violence against children (Samara, 2010; van Blerk, 2011; Maharaj, 2011).

Where levels of poverty and inequality are more extreme, such as in parts of the Global South, there is increased pressure on MSE organisers to clear the streets in an effort to portray a safe and desirable image. Country governments therefore have to cope with the paradox of boosting foreign investment and tourism at the same time as managing day-to-day poverty and social problems (Rogerson, 2009). This was a particular issue for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Fear that crime and poverty would frighten off foreign tourism and investment from international trade led to a solution focussed on security, policing and prisons, including clearing the streets of 'undesirable elements' (SANTAC, 2007). Ironically, despite reports of street children being forcibly evicted as part of this street clearance, vulnerable children were only a minor feature of the legacy planning and large-scale assessments of broader national, social and economic development resulting from hosting the World Cup (Maharaj, 2011).

### ***Child sexual exploitation (CSE)***

Hard evidence of CSE occurring before and during MSEs is scarce. The examples we uncovered largely indicate risk rather than incidence of CSE, or, their explicit connection to the event is difficult to verify. For example, before the 2008 African Cup of Nations in Ghana police uncovered plans to recruit children into prostitution during the event (Morrow, 2008). The Institute of Migration also reported on young girls rescued from a brothel in the days prior to this event (International Organisation for Migration, 2008). A general rise in child prostitution was predicted by NGOs over the period of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South

Africa but, since this was part of a general rising trend in the country, its exact connection to the event was unclear (Molo Songololo in Jelbert, 2010). The numbers could also be attributable to raised awareness. Whilst many of the underage girls encountered by the Vice Squad during the World Cup *appeared* to originate from poor rural areas of South Africa, and to have been groomed and coerced into the sex trade, there is no clear data to support this perception (London Councils and GLE Consulting, 2011).

Another risk of CSE during the 2010 World Cup arose from the extended school holidays, which left children unsupervised and vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation (Hayes, 2010). The banning of street traders and hawkers from 'FIFA zones' also placed economic strain upon families, potentially fuelling domestic violence and increasing risks of CSE for economic purposes (Maharaj, 2011, p. 59). Football events are perhaps particularly risky due to the sexist culture of 'boys behaving badly' that is culturally associated with the game (Palmer, 2011). The connection between domestic violence and the 2006 World Cup indicated a link between CSE, increased alcohol consumption and MSEs (Braaf & Gilbert, 2007). Overall, child sexual exploitation linked to MSEs appears to be hidden behind other social problems such as diverted services, family stress, poverty and domestic violence.

### **Human trafficking for sexual exploitation affecting children**

Very few studies focus *only* on sexual exploitation of children at or around MSEs but significant attention has been paid to the alleged connection of these events with street grooming, human trafficking and prostitution more generally. We cannot rule out that these reports do reflect likely impacts upon children (Henning, Craggs *et al.*, 2006; Morrow, 2008, p. 263). Predicted rises in demand for commercial sex services from visitors and tourists at MSEs have been attributed to the assumed connection between sexual exploitation and these events (Palmer, 2011, p. 4; SANTAC, 2007). Other than a few reported cases, however, there seems to be no robust evidence to support these predictions.

The 2004 Olympic Games in Greece was the first MSE where this issue drew significant public interest. The number of human trafficking victims increased by 94% in 2004 and remained high in subsequent years (Gustafson, 2011, p. 434), yet none of these cases were



linked by the Greek authorities to the event itself (Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women [GAATW], 2011). The 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany also attracted media speculation and claims that 40,000 women would be trafficked to the event in response to a surge in demand for commercial sex (Morrow, 2008). Only five cases of human trafficking with a direct link to the World Cup were actually reported (Tavella, 2007; Gustafson, 2011, p. 446; SANTAC, 2007), although the German Government did report an increase in legalised prostitution as a result of the World Cup (The Future Group, 2007). Media and anti-prostitution groups also referenced the 40,000 estimate before the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. Yet, according to British Columbia's Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons, no referrals for sexual exploitation in connection with the event were made (Pemberton Ford, 2012). The 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa attracted similar media attention on an anticipated increase in sex workers (Richter & Delva, 2011). Estimates broadly ranged from 40,000-100,000 but, again, no evidence was found to support such speculation. So, a causal relationship between human trafficking for sexual exploitation and MSEs is unverified (Delva, Richter *et al.*, 2011; Gould, 2010).

Researchers seem to agree a rationale for fear is logical yet there is little systematic research yielding supporting evidence for the impact of MSEs on sex work (Richter & Delva, 2011, p. 7; Hayes, 2010). It is difficult to judge whether this evidence gap is a reflection of the success of mitigation strategies, or of the non-existence of the problem (Hayes, 2010), or of the weakness of monitoring and evaluation designs. The absence of baseline data about CSE also means it is not possible to know whether prostitution figures during MSEs are an increase on the norm. Whilst one study asserted that 10,000 women were involved in prostitution during the 2000 Sydney Olympics (Coordination Group for the Human Trafficking and London 2012 Network, 2011), for example, we cannot say whether or not this was atypical.

Several critics of the alleged connection between human trafficking and MSEs argue that it is *'highly manufactured for use as a tool in morally charged campaigns about the nature of prostitution'* (Chris Smith in Morrow, 2008, p. 258). This source, for example, reports that the predicted figure of 40,000 trafficking victims associated with the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany was more about a political agenda to de-legalise prostitution than raising

awareness of concerns over exploitation. This view was endorsed in our interview with human rights consultant Mike Dottridge (personal communication, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

To get under the personal and organisational ideologies and political agendas of these assertions would require investment of time and resources in accurately reporting precise evidence of what abuse is taking place (Cherti, Pennington & Galos, 2012). Overreliance on media reporting is problematic, demonstrated by research on media coverage before, during and after the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa (Hamman, 2011). Prior to the event, anti-trafficking campaigns hyped the prevalence of human trafficking in the media. During and after the event, however, coverage was low because other stories took the limelight. As a result, the public was misinformed, making it difficult to differentiate between allegations and evidence of what actually took place. We conclude that human trafficking for sexual exploitation associated with MSEs appears to be adult-focussed, responsive to advocacy interventions and difficult to measure. Where it does occur, it is likely to mask harms to children.

Many assertions were apparent in the literature about the sources of risk for child exploitation associated with MSEs. In relation to the FIFA World Cup, for example, some interviewees talked about the 'obvious' risks of high numbers of people gathering in one place, opportunities for criminal activity, violence and abuse through street round-ups, deceit by pimps and agencies to drive women and children into the paid sex workforce, trafficking for child labour, the dangerous influences of paedophiles, and increased alcohol and drug consumption associated with the 'soccer mood'. However, whilst these concerns sound alarming, we found that they often rested on weak evidence, propaganda by vested interests and pre-existing social problems in the vicinity of MSEs. The challenge for both researchers and advocates of child safety is to unravel hard evidence of the *scale* of any such problems and any *causal associations* they might have with a given sport event. To do this, robust research designs and reliable data are essential. The very nature of child exploitation, however, does not lend itself to conventional hypothesis testing and the illicit, sensitive, personal and hidden qualities of exploitation problems render them hard to reach by researchers.

## Mitigating interventions

Responses to minimise the impact of risks for children associated with MSEs are wide-ranging: some align with one element of the risk framework (Figure 1) and others attempt to address the diversity of specific risks. It is evident from past literature, and from our consultations, that dedicated child-focussed responses are scarce. Very few programmatic or advocacy interventions are age-specific and most address general rather than particular risks. Also, human trafficking appears to overshadow all other risks in relation to the attention, resources and priority afforded to it by programmers, irrespective of the relative significance of this risk for children. There is very little material on programmes and advocacy related to child labour, CSE and displacement. This skew in the literature masks the fact that children are all-too-often victims when adults close to them are exploited. The corollary of this, however, is that many protective interventions targeted at adults can also have important prevention benefits for children.

Interventions fall under three main headings: human trafficking affecting children; child sexual exploitation; and general advocacy. Within these, multi-agency initiatives include: law enforcement (e.g. special visa regulations, fast-track courts), child protection strategies (e.g. safe houses, holiday clubs, facilities for street children, ECPAT's Code of Conduct for the tourism industry (The Code, 2013), and mobile telephone apps), and HIV/AIDS awareness programmes (e.g. leaflets, posters, postcards and e-learning resources).

Multi-agency initiatives that are focussed solely on legislation are important but are just a start (Hamman, 2011, p. 14). Actions to address the wider global, national and individual circumstances that increase children's vulnerability to exploitation are just as important as demand-side interventions in, for example, risks associated with the Brazil 2014 FIFA World Cup (Morrow, 2008, p. 264). Whilst Brazil's human trafficking law is alleged to be corruptly enforced, 24% of the population are also presently living below the poverty line and estimates suggest 250,000 – 400,000 children are forced into domestic prostitution (US Dept of State, Trafficking in Persons report p. 85, 2009, cited in Gustafson, 2011). Tackling these on-going problems whilst investing public money in stadium infrastructure (which includes \$3.5billion for stadium renovation for the Olympic Games and \$1.5+ billion for the

World Cup stadiums and sporting facilities (Alm, 2007)) was thus a key challenge for the Brazilian Government and 2014 World Cup organisers.

### **Responding to risk to children associated with MSEs**

The impacts of child exploitation associated with MSEs are tangible and direct but also intangible and indirect (Bob, Swart & Smit, 2011). Giulianotti and Klauser (2009) argue for moving away from a narrow focus on security issues, like terrorist risk or spectator violence, towards broader considerations of poverty, inequality, deep social divisions and associated urban crime. For example, when a host nation redirects resources away from service delivery in poor areas into infrastructure projects this leads to problems of poverty-driven child exploitation elsewhere. Jelbert (2010) exemplified this, alleging that there was an increase in juvenile gang rapes in Kwa Zulu Natal during the 2010 World Cup due to police being redeployed closer to FIFA venue areas. The literature is clearly dominated by the issue of human trafficking yet this masks exploitation of children that lies *behind* the exploitation of adults. Whilst the risks of child exploitation *per se* certainly increased during some of these events, the examples discussed all highlight the universal rarity of reliable empirical data concerning child exploitation around MSEs (Hayes, 2010). Robust research designs, focused specifically on children, are essential in order to verify these assertions.

The lack of evidence connecting child exploitation and other abuses causally with MSEs is one of the main findings from our work. But why? Among many possible reasons are that:

1. the problem does not exist – which is **most unlikely** given the reports and case studies we have heard from NGO workers on the ground;
2. the problem is masked by the attention given to adult exploitation – which is **probable** since age-specific advocacy work appears to be uncommon;
3. monitoring and evaluation research is absent or not designed to capture the data with enough rigour – which is **highly likely** given the relative scarcity of research and data that we have uncovered.

Neither absence of data nor moral panics, however, are excuses for inaction. Risks to children are clearly evident in the context of MSEs, so there is a need to mitigate them, to

prevent them and to respond to harm. Good protective interventions need not wait for research to catch up but the long-term prospects for funding and political support for such work depend crucially on demonstrating the exact scale of problems and the effectiveness of interventions. In Table 1, we propose a set of actions for event planners and advocates for risk mitigation work at future MSEs.

[Table 1 about here]

Whilst MSEs may not be a direct *cause* of child exploitation they present a significant opportunity for hosting organisations to act as a *catalyst* for the adoption of policies and practices that will enhance child protection. Strategies to protect children should not just be a temporary priority attached to a single MSE but part of a sustainable long-term plan, as has already occurred in some MSEs with environmental standards. The social impact assessments that are already embedded in the criteria for many MSEs should also prioritise the voices, needs and rights of children.

Moving away from an advocacy perspective to seek an explanation of change in relation to child protection and MSEs, we might draw from the wider debates about Centres and Peripheries in social and economic theory (Shils, 1961; Galtung, 1971). The IOC and FIFA are arguably the two most powerful organisations at the Centre of international sport yet both have suffered relentless critique in recent decades from the Peripheries. Examples include blogs, such as James Dorsey's (<http://mideastsoccer.blogspot.co.uk/>), critical collectives, such as *Play the Game* (<http://www.playthegame.org/>), Don't X the Line (<http://www.dontxtheline.com>) and Give Us Back Our Game (<http://www.giveusbackourgame.co.uk/>) and alternative sport structures, such as New Games (Fluegelman, 1976) and the Harry Potter-originated game Quidditch (<http://iqaquidditch.com/>). It could be argued, therefore, that these organisations might bolster their threatened power bases by engaging with projects like child protection for strategic rather than humanitarian reasons.

## Conclusions

We have posited that child protection related to MSEs is a political blind spot for most organising committees and host communities. If this is right, then there is an overriding need for action by those responsible for commissioning and staging MSEs, such as FIFA, the IOC, governments and civil society, to anticipate, prepare for and adopt risk mitigation strategies and interventions in relation to children. Positive leadership from these culturally powerful bodies could prove decisive in shifting hearts, minds and actions in the direction of improved safety for children associated with MSEs. The boundaries of moral and social liability are contentious, however, especially where international sport organisations like FIFA or the International Olympic Committee are perceived to have unlimited funds and are therefore expected to invest in resolving every conceivable social ill. Local host agencies within host countries and cities must decide exactly how to prepare in ways best suited to their own conditions and state of readiness. For some, cultural, historical, financial and legal limitations mean that the delivery of risk mitigation is likely to be less than ideal. From an ethical perspective, there seems no reason why the large sport organisations should not accept their social and moral responsibilities that align with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. From a theoretical perspective, however, children's rights might offer simply an ethical fig leaf to cover the embarrassment of organisations whose power is threatened from the margins.

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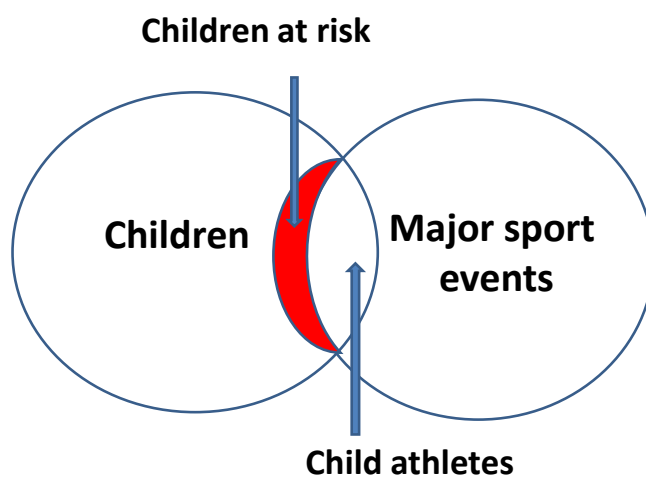
**Table 1            Main messages for MSE planners and advocates of child protection**

Establish a coalition of all relevant partners as early as possible and develop a coherent strategy that allocates clear responsibilities and avoids disrupting the everyday work of local NGOs
Secure a Memorandum of Cooperation, or similar, among all coalition partners to place the interests of children above those of the partners agencies
Ensure that the exploitation of children is also made visible in all interventions
Ensure that all interventions have built in from the very beginning robust monitoring and evaluation plans
Ensure that monitoring and evaluation plans adopt multi-method designs that provide both quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (experiential) evidence
Do not assume that no data = no problem
Broaden the gaze of policy makers, programmers and advocates to include potential child exploitation associated with other MSE-related issues e.g. displacement and construction labour
Hold MSE hosts accountable to their social development legacy claims through longitudinal monitoring and evaluation
Adopt child exploitation criteria and child protection assessments as a requirement of bidding for all MSEs
Ensure that children are clearly targeted explicitly in any risk mitigation activity
Involve and listen to children from a range of demographic backgrounds in the design and delivery of all child-protective interventions

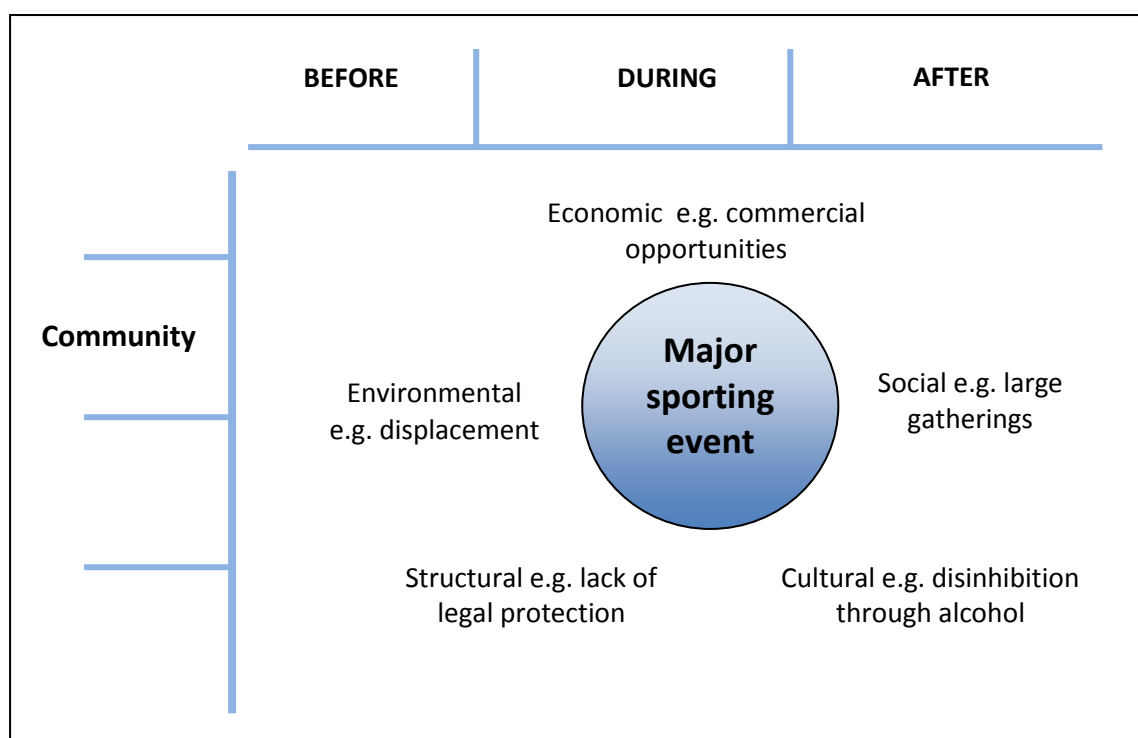
## **FIGURE CAPTIONS**

**Figure 1      Children at risk in relation to major sporting events**

**Figure 2      Framework for analysing risks to children associated with MSEs**



**Figure 1** Children at risk in relation to major sporting events



**Figure 2** Framework for analysing risks to children associated with MSEs